MOSCOW'S HOLY WARS

Over a year ago, Patriarch Cyril (Gundiaev) of Moscow declared that the war in Ukraine was "sacred", and that Orthodoxy there was being persecuted by "uniates and schismatics".[1] "With the beginning of hostilities," he said, "the uniates and schismatics, having been given arms, under the pretext of antiterrorist operations, have begun outright aggression against the clergy of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the east of the country"…[2] Since then, the war in Ukraine has not gone so well for Putin and Gundiaev - brothers, not in Christ, but in the KGB-FSB. However, the KGB cannot exist without war; its whole function is, was and shall be to conquer the world for the KGB, which has now renamed itself "Holy Russia" and "the Third Rome" in order to deceive the more gullible Orthodox. So they looked round for another "holy war", and they found one in Syria… That makes three "holy wars" in five years: the first two against Orthodox states, Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, and the third against the Sunni Muslims of ISIS and Turkey. Where will it all end? And is there anything holy in any of them?

1. Uniates and Schismatics

The KGB now controls Russia more completely than ever before. In Soviet times there were three centres of power in Russia: the Party, the Army and the KGB. Now there is only one: the KGB. Thus all leading posts, and 70% of the bureaucracy, are filled by KGB men.

In case anyone should have any illusions about the real nature of the KGB that rules Russia today, Vitaly Portnikov writes: "One of the high-ranking Chekists [KGB agents] once said to me with a sigh that after the liquidation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the KGB's graduates, convinced that now that the Party had 'evaporated', all power and all financial flow belonged only to them, came into conflict with the powerful force of the criminal world. Now it has become possible to confirm that the Chekists did not begin to struggle against the criminal world in the way that they struggled against the Party apparatus for so many years. They preferred to become part of this criminal world, because the basic aims of the Chekists and the criminals – power and money – completely coincide. And all the rest - the beautiful slogans about 'the Third Rome' getting up from its knees, 'Sacred Crimea', 'Ukrainian fascists', all the adventures in Georgia, the Donbass or in Syria – are a smoke screen, designed to hide from the Russians and the whole

[1] Ekaterina Schetkina, "Настоящая цель провокативного обращения Патриарха Кирилла", 19 August, 2014, http://uainfo.org/blognews/377064-nastoyaschaya-cel-provokativnogo-obrascheniya-patriarha-kirilla.html.

[2] http://www.echo.msk.ru/blog/expertmus/1382105-echo/

of the rest of the world the simple and boring truth – that Russia is ruled by bandits. Not in a figurative or insulting sense of the word, but in the most literal, professional sense."[3]

Having established that absolutely basic, axiomatic fact about Russia today, let us be clear about another fact: there is no persecution of Orthodoxy as such in Eastern Ukraine. The seizure of the Crimea was pure banditry, in violation of the international agreement on the Ukraine signed by Russia in 1994 and accomplished, as Putin now admits (he denied it at first), by Russian special forces. Russia invaded the Crimea and Donbass on the excuse that they were being overrun by "Banderovtsy", that is, West Ukrainian uniates.[4] Although Ukrainian nationalist uniatism exists, its influence both on the Maidan revolution and on present events in the East has been grossly exaggerated. Right-wing nationalists won about 4% of the vote in the recent presidential elections – in other Balkan Orthodox countries, their share of the electorate is probably much higher. In Russia, experts claim there are 53 neo-Nazi organizations, and Russian neo-Nazis are fighting in Eastern Ukraine. [5]

As for the Ukrainian President Poroshenko, he is not a uniate. All the evidence suggests that he is a "normal" Orthodox believer; at least until recently he regularly attended services in the Moscow Patriarchate, and even served in the altar. It is very unlikely that he would want to prosecute a war against his co-religionists for religious reasons. Moreover, Poroshenko has the support of the majority of the Ukrainian Orthodox hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, who have conspicuously not followed the warlike rhetoric of their patriarch (which is not to say that some of them

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[3] Portnikov, "Политики в законе: кто на самом деле руководит современной Россией", *Glavred,* 15 December, 2015, http://glavred.info/avtorskie_kolonki/politiki-v-zakone-kto-na-samom-dele-rukovodit-sovremennoy-rossiey-348891.html

[4] Stepan Bander was head of the "Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists", and fought for Ukrainian independence against both the Poles and the Soviets. He collaborated for a while with the Nazis, but was also imprisoned by them. His organization struggled against Soviet power for some years after the end of World War II, and one historian claims that it was co-opted by MI6. In 1959 he was assassinated in Munich by a KGB agent. "Putin welcomed the annexation of Crimea by Russia by declaring that he 'was saving them from the new Ukrainian leaders who are the ideological heirs of Bandera, Hitler's accomplice during World War II'. Pro-Russian activists claimed 'Those people in Kiev are Bandera-following Nazi collaborators'. And Ukrainians living in Russia complained of being labelled a 'Banderite' (even when they were from parts of Ukraine where Bandera has no popular support). Groups who do idolize Bandera did take part in the Euromaidan protests, but were a minority element." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan_Bandera#cite_note-B2014ICCPRUIU-10)

[5] "Russian neo-Nazis in the ranks of terrorists in Eastern Ukraine" http://euromaidanpress.com/2014/08/18/russian-neo-nazis-in-the-ranks-of-terrorists-in-eastern-ukraine/

may not have secret or not-so-secret sympathies with Moscow). This has brought them closer to the other large group of Ukrainian Orthodox, the Kievan Patriarchate (KP) but distanced them from their titular head in Moscow.

For it is the KP that Patriarch Cyril really has in mind when speaking about "schismatics". What he fears above all is that the Ukrainian Orthodox should come within the sphere of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who looks back to the time (before 1686) when the whole of the Ukraine was under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. This contest for power over the Ukraine between Moscow and Constantinople is bedevilling preparations for the "Pan-Orthodox Council" slated for May, 2016.

So what has Patriarch Cyril gained so far by his belligerent "holy war" rhetoric? A steady stream of priests and parishes from the Ukrainian MP into other Ukrainian Orthodox Churches. In fact, he has prepared the ground for a very large schism in his own Church, in what he calls "canonical Orthodoxy"! For it is precisely those parishioners of his own Church living in the Ukraine who, as Ekaterina Schetkina writes, "are probably suffering the bitterest disillusionment. They have really lost a lot in this war. They have been accustomed to think of themselves as part of a huge Church that cares for them as a mother. But she has used them as nothing more than spare change. As an excuse for political interference and even military invasion. And now she is also urging them on to 'exploits' and 'martyrdom'. That would be okay if it were for the sake of the faith – but no, it is for the sake of another geopolitical chimera."[6]

We may ask: when, not so very long ago, there was a very real persecution of Orthodoxy, not in some foreign country, but in his own Soviet fatherland, did Patriarch Cyril raise his voice in protest and call for a "holy war" against the persecutors? Absolutely not! On the contrary, he, together with all his fellow-hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, denied the very existence of the persecution and even slandered those who courageously asserted it, sending them on their way to prison with a wave of his all-holy, rolex-encrusted hand! Just recently, Metropolitan Barsanuphius of St. Petersburg declared that the Soviet camps were "like resorts".[7]

Again, we may ask: as he laments the sufferings of his flock in the Ukraine – caused entirely by the successors of those KGB colleagues of his who persecuted Russian Orthodoxy for most of the twentieth century, – has Patriarch Cyril donated any of his vast fortune – calculated some years ago at $4 *billion* – to the relief of

[6] Ekaterina Schetkina, "Святейшее разочарование", http://gazeta.zn.ua/internal/svyateyshee-razocharovanie-_.html, August 21, 2014.
[7] "Митрополит РПЦ сравнил сталинские лагеря с курортом", *Politsovet*, December 14, 2015, http://politsovet.ru/50593-mitropolit-rpc-sravnil-stalinskie-lagerya-s-kurortom.html.

these sufferings? No word of such generosity has reached us. What we have heard, however, is that Cyril considers the sanctions regime that his flock will now have to suffer because of his "holy war" to be a good opportunity for "belt-tightening" (something which the slim-line hierarchs of the patriarchate will certainly not be inclined to do)!

Another question for his All-Holiness: if he is so worried about the invasion of "uniates" into Eastern Ukraine, why has he become a de facto uniate himself? Cyril's enthusiasm for the Roman Catholic heresy is not a recent fad. His mentor, the notorious Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad, as well as being KGB Agent "Sviatoslav", was a secret Catholic bishop, who died as a Catholic at the feet of Pope John-Paul I in 1978.[8]

Cyril has zealously continued the pro-Catholic orientation of his mentor. Together with the head of the Department of External Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), he has courted the Pope hardly less fervently than his rival for the Pope's affections, the Ecumenical Patriarch; each hopes to be the number two to the Pope after the New Church Order is proclaimed in the wake of the Eighth Ecumenical Council. Putin has supported his brother-chekist's advances by visiting the Vatican (and keeping the Pope waiting) and supporting his ecumenical initiatives. For it must be remembered that it was the KGB that propelled the Moscow Patriarchate into the ecumenical movement in the early 1960s with the aim of infiltrating the West through its ever-gullible churchmen. Moreover, Cyril has shown no less zeal for Protestant ecumenism: at the 1991 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, he not only took part in the common prayers with members of all kinds of religions, but called the WCC "our common home"!

So any idea that Gundiaev is somehow "defending Orthodoxy" can be dismissed immediately – even if he himself were truly Orthodox in his faith, which he is not. Like every Soviet patriarch since Sergius Stragorodsky, he has been defending only the interests of the purely secular organization to which he owes his first loyalty. For, as Putin likes to say, "once a chekist – always a chekist".

2. Muslims and Terrorists

[8] Serge Keleher, *Passion and Resurrection – the Greek Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine, 1939-1989*, Stauropegion, L'viv, 1993, pp. 101-102. Cf. *The Tablet*, March 20, 1993. Recently, writes Ludmilla Perepiolkina, "the Catholic Journal *Truth and Life* published the memoirs of Miguel Arranz, in which this Jesuit, who in Nicodemus' time taught at the Leningrad Theological Academy, told, among other things, that with Nicodemus' blessing he celebrated 'the Eastern Rite Liturgy' in Nicodemus' house church at the Leningrad Theological Academy." (*Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition,* St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 276, note).

Although Putin claims that his military venture into the Middle East is only "temporary", to save the Christians of the area from ISIS and other terrorists, all the indications (for example, from the fortifications surrounding the military base at Latakia) are that his aim is a more permanent occupation. Besides, the logic of the system of alliances he is building up points to a strategy that has nothing to do with the purely propaganda slogan of defending Christianity. He is allying himself essentially with *Shiite Islam* – the Shiite States of Iran, Iraq and Syria[9] - against *Sunni Islam* – the Sunni States of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Already in August, 2013 Putin declared that he wanted to "destroy" Saudi Arabia; and since then the Saudis' policy of flooding the market with oil so as to lower the world oil price and drastically reduce Russia's oil revenues must have enraged Russia's billionaire rulers. Putin has to act against the Saudis in order to restore the shaky Russian economy, already damaged by western sanctions – and, most important for him personally, to see off potential rivals to his leadership. Besides, important new fossil fuel reserves have been found off the Syrian and Israeli coasts. If these reserves were to fall into the hands of western companies, Russia's economy would go into free-fall. Almost certainly, this puts Putin on a collision course also with *Israel*, which fears a threat to its very existence from Iran and its satellite, Hizbollah…

These are the real springs of Russian foreign policy, whose basic aims, let us remind ourselves, are money and power. Religion has nothing to do with it. Like Napoleon and Hitler, Putin has a purely instrumental attitude to religion. He recognizes that it is an important element in very many people's lives, especially in the Muslim world, and an important stabilizing and motivating factor in Russia. So he *pretends* to be religious, extending vast financial privileges to his fellow-bandits from the Moscow Patriarchate, currying favour among Russia's Muslims to the extent of attending the opening of a vast new mosque in Moscow, and even donning a skull cap and praying at the Weeping Wall in Jerusalem.

He is an ecumenist, not by conviction (what convictions can a bandit have?!), but by purely political calculation. Of course, this leads him into flagrant contradictions. He cannot claim to be the champion of the One True Faith of Orthodoxy against the infidel Western heresies while at the same time praising the false faith of Islam to the skies. In this flagrant inconsistency he is followed, of

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[9] The Syrian regime is not strictly Shiite, but Alawite. However, the very strange Alawite religion is essentially branch of Shiite Islam, according to Wikopedia: "The **Alawites**, also known as **Alawis** (*ʿAlawiyyah* Arabic: علوية), are an Islamic sect, centered in Syria, who follow a very highly contested and controversial branch of the Twelver school of Shia Islam but with syncretistic elements" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alawites)

course, by his puppet-slaves in the Moscow Patriarchate. Patriarch Cyril is *so* respectful of the false prophet Mohammed!

3. Beating the Drums of War

Protopriest Vsevolod Chaplin, spokesman of the Moscow Patriarchate, recently said on "Moscow Echo" radio: "If society lives in conditions of relative peace - calm, satiety - for a certain number of decades, two or three, it may live them in conditions of worldliness. Nobody will go and die for the market or democracy, but the necessity of dying for society and its future will arise sooner or later. Peace does not last long. Peace will not last long now, glory to God. Why do I say "Glory to God"? A society in which life is too sated and calm, without problems, a comfortable life - is a society abandoned by God, such a society will not live long. The balance between worldliness and religiosity will probably be corrected by God Himself, who intervenes in history and sends sufferings. Sufferings that in this case will be beneficial. Because they permit those who have become too accustomed to living quietly, calmly and in comfort to come to their senses. They have to live in another way."

This is a dangerous half-truth. Many writers (Dostoyevsky, for example) have pointed out that war can be a cleansing process - a cure for the sins amassed during peace. But only under certain conditions. War undertaken in obedience to a legitimate ruler for a just cause is beneficial, like all obedience to true authorities. But war undertaken out of slavish submission to a false authority for evil ends benefits nobody. The only benefit that could come out of such a war is that the evil regime that started it is swept aside making possible a regeneration of the state and society. In other words, such a war can be beneficial to society only if it is LOST. If it is won, then it only increases the evil in the world, the hatred, the passions of all kinds.

Chaplin evidently knows that Putin is going to war, and has been instructed, together with all the leading commentators in the Russia media, to prepare society for its inevitability. Being a sergianist, he is obliged to approve of this war and ascribe to it the sacred character of the truly just wars of such Russian heroes as Alexander Nevsky and Alexander the Blessed. But a war on behalf of Shiite Islam against Sunni Islam for the ultimate aim of ensuring the revenues of Russia’s robber barons has nothing in common with those wars. Putin's wars so far have been evil and have only increased the evil in society. The coming war will be good only if it removes the evil - that is, first of all, Putin himself together with his neo-Soviet bandit regime.

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Holy Great-Martyr Barbara.